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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; LATIN AMERICAN CRISIS; SECRETARY RICE TO
THE REGION; 03/07/08

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's local papers carry opinion pieces and editorials related to the latest developments in the confrontation between Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela; the role played by Argentine President Cristina Kirchner in the crisis; and Secretary Rice's upcoming trip to the region.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Diplomacy should prevail"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" editorializes (03/07) "Finally, after almost 24 hours of tense negotiations, the OAS Permanent Council unanimously approved a resolution that was agreed upon by Colombia and Ecuador, which has fortunately avoided war...

"... It has been positive that the OAS was able to calm down the three confrontational governments and that, in line with Brazil's rapid intervention and efficient proposal..., it has decided to make up a committee led by OAS secretary general Jose Miguel Insulza... following a series of consultations with the governments of the region.

"... We should praise the region's ability to react to this particular situation... Perhaps it is too soon to say that war has been avoided through diplomacy, which has lately been relegated by unilateral attitudes that contribute nothing to such an essential factor as peace, but it is not too soon to say that the situation is now more encouraging than the day before yesterday.

"Ecuador's lack of consent for Colombia's military incursion should not be overlooked as though it was just an anecdote. Unfortunately, the governments of Correa and Chavez... do not consider this but are focused instead on their logical defense of territorial sovereignty...

"We in Latin America should also define what we want and we do not... We are supposed to want democracy, freedom and peace. We are supposed not to want terrorism or kidnappings or drug trafficking. If we do not want this, we should not forgive crime by extolling the FARC."

- "3 Cs in Caracas - Cristina, Correa and Chavez"

Michael Soltys, executive editor of liberal, English-language "Buenos Aires Herald," writes (03/07) "President Cristina Kirchner's presence in Venezuela yesterday could be summarized as handling almost the worst possible trip in almost the best possible way...

"Cristina Kirchner has thus far handled this Venezuelan visit with more subtlety than her early clash with the US over the Miami court

case...

This easy road also misses an opportunity to occupy the moral high ground by offering to mediate between the two sides...

"Cristina Kirchner has not gone so far as offering herself as a mediator but she called emphatically yesterday for 'moderation'... Her insistence on solving this problem on a multilateral rather than unilateral basis is obviously a criticism of the Colombian approach but it might also be understood as a dig at the way Chavez has taken an incursion into a country not his own almost as a personal rather than a regional offence..."

- "Rice will travel to the South but will avoid Argentina"

Hugo Alconada Mon, daily-of-record "La Nacion's" Washington-based correspondent, writes (03/07) "The US State Department announced that Secretary Condoleezza Rice will travel to Brazil and Chile on March 13-15, and it termed both countries as 'two strategic regional partners.'

"As a consequence of this communiqu, we infer that she will not visit Argentina.

"... Rice will be accompanied by Tom Shannon in her trip...

"Official US sources pointed out that the US- Argentine bilateral relationship is 'an ongoing process,' which includes an eventual meeting in this capital city between Cabinet Chief Alberto Fernandez and FM Taiana and Shannon.

"In the following hours, Shannon could decide to make a stop at the Argentine Government House and San Martin Palace sometime while in Brazil and Chile or at the end of Rice's trip...

"Nonetheless, even when his trip to Buenos Aires was confirmed,

cautiousness prevails within the Bush administration as well as among Democrat and Republican representatives for the region. Most of them place Argentina at a 'sui generis' situation, far from allied countries such as Colombia... but neither is it an antagonistic country (like Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua)."

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